

2018 FIA World Rally Championship
Round 12: RallyRACC Catalunya – Rally de España

***Michelin's range and people play key role
in Catalonia tyre strategies***

This year's RallyRACC Catalunya turned out to be colder and wetter than the recent Wales Rally GB, which is certainly saying something!

Action kicked off with a super-special in the streets of Barcelona on Thursday evening before crews returned to the service park in Salou, some 80km south of Catalonia's capital.

Spain's round is the only mixed-surface fixture of the FIA World Rally Championship, with Friday's leg an all-gravel affair followed by two days on asphalt on Saturday and Sunday. This specificity means teams need to change the configuration of their respective cars on Friday evening, since the suspension parts, transmission systems and settings they use are different for sealed-surfaces.

To cover the weekend's unique mix of surface and weather conditions, Michelin's partners were able to choose between two distinct tyre ranges, namely the H5 (hard compound) and S6 (soft) versions of the MICHELIN Pilot Sport for the asphalt stages, plus the MICHELIN LTX Force H4 (hard) and MICHELIN LTX Force M6 (medium) for the day on dirt. Meanwhile, the French firm's WRC2 competitors had a choice between the RH3 (hard) and RS (soft) versions of the MICHELIN Pilot Sport asphalt tyre, and between the MICHELIN Latitude Cross H90 (hard) and S80 (soft) for gravel.

When heavy rain swept over the region on Saturday, crews also had the option to fit the MICHELIN Pilot Sport FW3, the specific tread pattern, high 'sea-to-land' tread block ratio and oblique lateral water-clearance grooves of which are designed to combine performance on wet roads with resistance to aquaplaning. This 'full wet' alternative was ideally suited to the situation but, in line with the rules, only eight were available per car, which led to some understandable head-scratching when it came to making the most judicious choice for the different competitive loops.

"The availability of the MICHELIN Pilot Sport FW3 was decisive," observes **Arnaud Rémy**, the manager of Michelin's rally programmes. "The conditions stayed dry for Friday's gravel stages, but then deteriorated significantly for the first day on asphalt when our 'full wet' tyre provided crews with a competitive edge. The teams were naturally able to benefit from the advice of our technicians who were in big demand in Catalonia, especially as the predictions of the teams' respective weather forecasters differed at times. It was consequently necessary to adapt swiftly and we saw that the spectrum of conditions covered by our different tyre and compound options was widely appreciated by competitors throughout the event. It is exactly this sort of rally that brings it home just how big a role tyres play in terms of performance and safety which are always the two chief focuses of our development work."





Michelin took 2,008 tyres to Catalonia in total (WRC crews: 960 / WRC2: 1,048), which is 700 more than it took to the United Kingdom for the all-gravel Wales Rally GB where the number of entries in the two classes was similar.

The 2018 RallyRACC Catalunya was won by Sébastien Loeb and Daniel Elena (Citroën C3 WRC) who finished clear of Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (M-Sport Ford Fiesta WRC). Elfyn Evans and Daniel Barritt (M-Sport Ford Fiesta WRC) came third to make it an all-Michelin podium. The victors in WRC2 were Finns Rovaniemi/Halttunen, ahead of the Czech Republic's Kopecky/Dresler. Norwegians Petter Solberg/Veronica Engan secured an all-Michelin top-three in this class, too.

The final round of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship will take teams to Coffs Harbour, New South Wales, Australia, on November 15-18.



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